

## Module Four: Providing Concordant Negative Results

- Providing the couple with concordant negative results
- Discussing risk reduction with the couple
- Identifying important counseling skills for delivering concordant negative results

Notes:

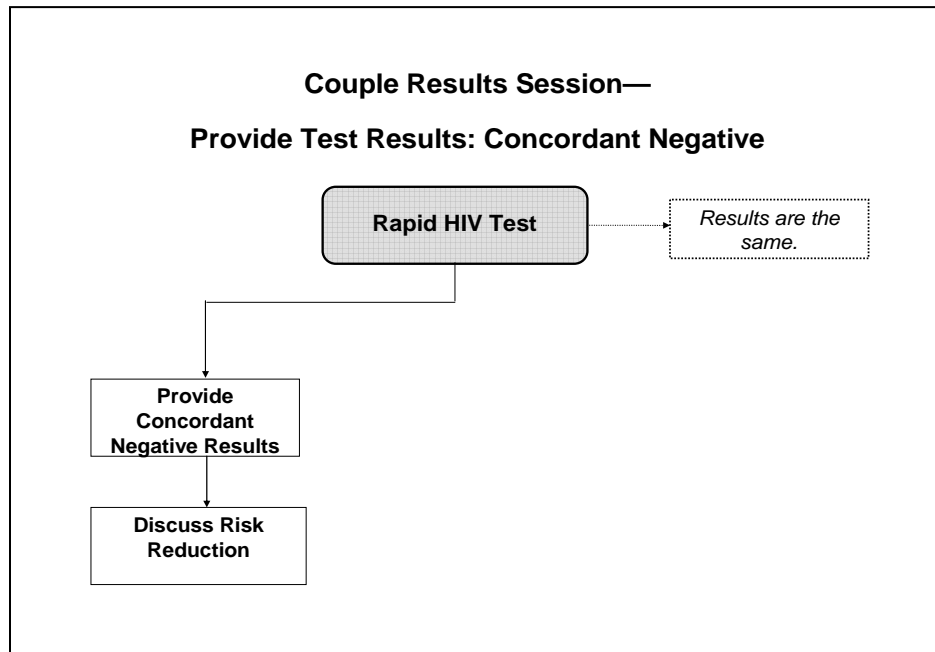
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## Component V-A: Provide Concordant Negative Results

### Background

Overall, the goal of the counselor in the concordant negative post-test session is the same as in the initial session—that is, to ease tension, diffuse blame, and emphasize the importance of the couple's collaboration and commitment to protect their relationship from HIV.

The following diagram illustrates the steps taken when the counselor meets with the couple for the post-test session.



Providing the couple with their results involves five tasks:

#### **Task 1: Inform the couple that their test results are available.**

The objective of this task is to transition back into the counseling session and let the partners know that they will be receiving their results.

#### **Task 2: Provide a simple summary of the couple's results: Both test results are negative, which indicates that neither partner is infected.**

Your objective is to state clearly and simply that both tests results are negative, indicating that each partner is not infected. If available, show the test results or test strips to the couple.

#### **TASK 3: Ask if the couple understands their results.**

Your objective is to make sure the couple has an accurate understanding of the outcome of the test results and their meaning and implication.

**TASK 4: Explore the couple's reaction to their results.**

Your objective is to allow the partners to express their own feelings and emotions about the test results they have received.

**TASK 5: Discuss results in the context of any recent risks outside of their relationship.**

Counselors should note the possibility that a recent exposure outside of the relationship may indicate a need for a retest, because a recent exposure may not have been detected by the HIV test.

The risk potentially posed by partners outside the relationship should be mentioned briefly and in the abstract. The counselor can say, "There is a very small chance that this test did not detect HIV if you were infected very recently. If you are concerned about a recent exposure to HIV, such as from another partner, you should get another test in about 4 weeks."

The most important point to convey is that the couple's test results do not reflect the HIV status of any other partners, past or present.

## **Component VI-A: Discuss Risk Reduction**

In this component, the counselor helps the couple to fully embrace and appreciate the implications of their HIV-negative status.

The conversation about risk reduction involves eight tasks.

### **Task 1: Address the risk associated with other partners.**

The objective of this task is to reinforce that the best way to protect the couple's status is by remaining faithful to their relationship and that the status of other partners can only be determined through HIV testing.

Being faithful means not having other sexual partners outside the couple's relationship. The following steps can help couples remain faithful to one another:

- Recognize that both partners being faithful to one another is the best way to protect their relationship and their future from HIV.
- Let others know of their commitment to the relationship.
- Establish shared goals and priorities.
- Demonstrate genuine respect for each other.
- Be supportive of each other.
- Maintain open and honest communication and talk through all problems as they arise.
- Recognize that there will be difficult and challenging times for both partners and commit to working through these times together.
- Act as a role model to family, friends, and co-workers by prioritizing the relationship, sharing social occasions and family events together, and openly acknowledging mutual commitment.

### **Task 2: Discuss couple's specific HIV concerns or risks based on pre-test discussion (if applicable).**

The objective of this task is to remind the partners of the concerns that brought them to CHCT and that they previously discussed in the session.

### **Task 3: Emphasize that condoms must always be used if either partner has sex outside the relationship.**

The objective of this task is to prevent assumptions about the status of other partners, convey that action must be taken to reduce or eliminate the risk posed by other partners, and assure referral of other partners to CHCT services.

### **Task 4: Explore skills required to reduce risk, such as:**

- Open communication
- Commitment to protect relationship from HIV.

**Task 5: Encourage the couple to communicate openly with each other about risk reduction and to stay faithful.**

You will need to help the couple anticipate the possibility of unplanned risks and the responsibility to protect the other partner.

**Task 6: Convey confidence in the ability of the couple to complete the plan and to protect each other.**

Through this task, you will provide positive reinforcement.

**Task 7: Encourage the couple to become ambassadors for testing, particularly for couples HIV counseling and testing services.**

You should empower the partners to support others to receive CHCT, while affirming their commitment to remain uninfected.

**Task 8: Provide needed referrals for services such as STIs, family planning, care during pregnancy, or support.**

The couple counseling skills and attributes that we discussed on the first day of this training will continue to be important when discussing risk reduction. Which skills do you think will be especially important?

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